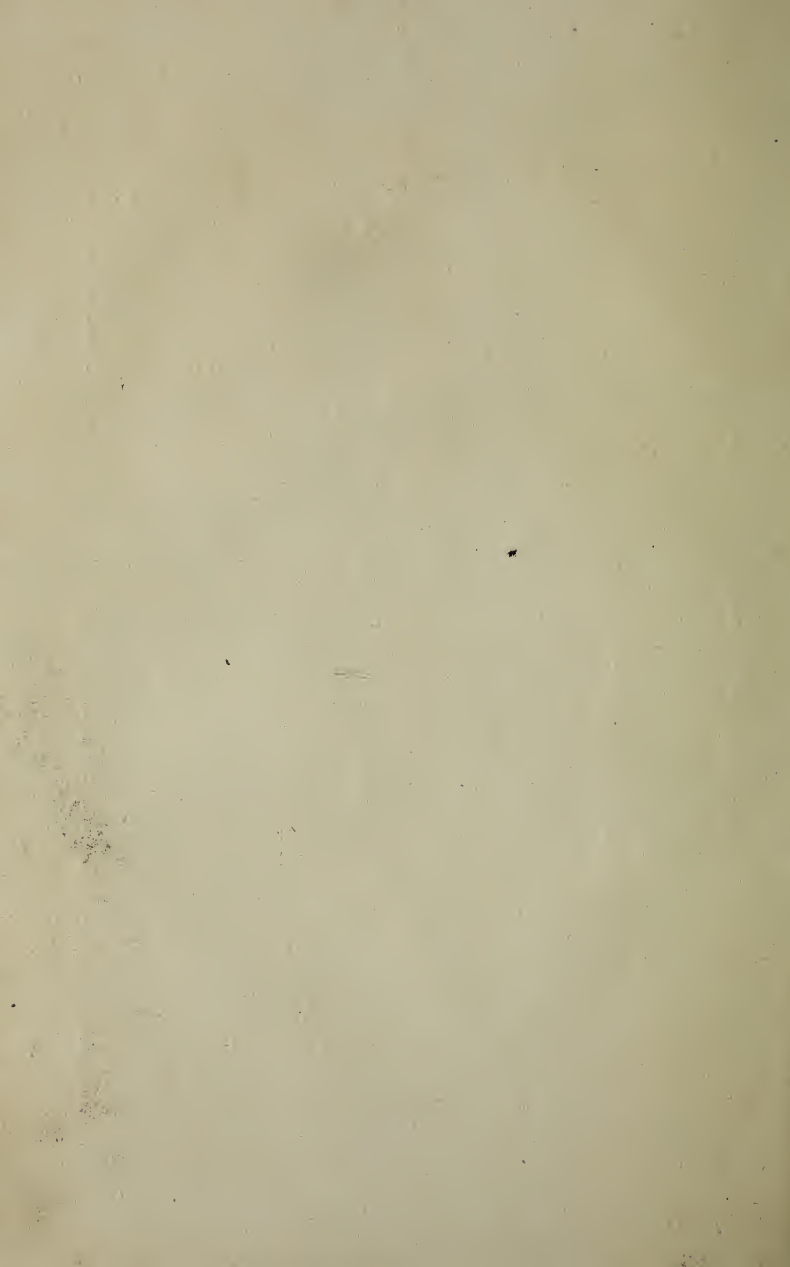


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THE PRIZE POEM ON A SACRED SUBJECT,
FOR 1863.

S. John in Patmos.

BY THE
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ARGUMENT.

Introduction—S. John in Patmos—State of the Churches of Asia

Minor—The Apocalypse—Division of the Apocalypse into the

Constant and the Changing Vision—The Constant Vision—

The Changing Vision: the Seven Seals (*Apoc.* IV.-VIII.); the

Seven Trumpets (IX.-XIV.); the Seven Vials (XV.-XXI.)—The

Central Types of the Apocalypse, viz.: the two allegorical

cities, Sodom and Babylon, and the two allegorical women—

These identified respectively with Jerusalem and Rome, Juda-

ism and Paganism, the cities and powers most opposed to

Christianity—The third Central Type, viz.: the New Jerusa-

lem or Christian Church, which combines the characters of

each of the former series of types, being described by S. John

as if it were at once a city and a woman.

Gen. Res. Rep. 11025 H. 11. 11. 11.



S. John in Patmos.

“ Mon esprit de Pathmos connut le saint delire,
L’effroi qui le précède, et l’effroi qui le fuit :
Et mon âme était triste, et les chants de ma lyre
Étaient comme ces voix qui pleurent dans la nuit.”

VICTOR HUGO.

HE who had leaned on Jesus’ breast, and stood
By the sad Mother underneath the Rood,
Stood now in Patmos; he who lately smiled
Among his “little children” stood exiled
From those his children of the Churches seven;
He who had seen on earth the dawn of heaven,
Was now to mount from earth ere death allowed;
Not now in body entering in the cloud,

But in the spirit o'er the clouds elate,
God's throne, earth's destiny, to contemplate.
Him following, as him the Spirit led,
May we that vision see which traversed
Time and eternity, now deep in gloom,
Now brightened with the glories which illumine
The courts of God, sublimely mystical
With fates deciphered not, which ever shall
Have their accomplishment, evolving still
Till dying Time his glass with earth's last dust shall fill.

In present darkness and distress arose
That Revelation; far was he from those
Whom he had loved and guided and sustained,
An aged, banished man; ah! what remained
Save loneliness and pain in Patmos' isle?
So that from prayer he stayed his lips awhile,
Or his weak hands from labour in the mine,
To think of them with love almost divine.

For them had he been spent, for them had wrought
The new philosophy, divinely taught,
That love is knowledge, and that God is love.
For them had striven to defend and prove
The truth 'gainst all perversity of man.
Now that the aged Metropolitan
Was taken from their head, would not the foe
With fiercer rage attempt to overthrow
The truth of God? Aye, well he marked the sign
That the wild boar would rend the sacred vine,
Tempest th' ecclesiastic ship befall,
Floods beat, and rains descend on the rock-founded
wall.

'Twas partly that false teachers now did swarm,
With sophistries the simple flock to charm;
Full of confusions were they, swollen with pride,
Skilful with wordy show the truth to hide:
And partly 'twas that on the Roman height
Fell Persecution gathered all her might:

Already Christ's true witness Antipas^a
Had fallen, and himself a victim was,
Deported thus; and many more must sink
In martyrdom, while some might haply shrink
From hideous torment, and the faith deny:
Ah, bitter peril, fierce necessity!

On this sad present founded, rose complete
The vision of the Holy Paraclete:
For they are ever honoured most who lean
To human wants from out that cloud serene
Of solemn thought, in which they fain would dwell,
But that the world hath need of them to quell
Its anarchies: they who with burning heart
Come down their own strong essence to impart,
And labour noblest things to keep alive:
True men of action, though contemplative.

^a *Rev.* II. 13.—“Even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

Many might I recount who have been blessed
Amid such toil with an entrancing rest,
Or visioned splendour; many whom the Dove
Divine, poetic, hath enswathed above
In snowy plumes and flashing Iris-gleams:
Two I remember, who in heavenly dreams
Were most like John; and exiles both were they,
Like him; and laboured, as did he, to stay
The thoughts of men on God in ancient time:
He who by Chebar saw the wheels sublime;
He who was called beloved in Babylon,
Who by the river's brink beheld the throne
Of judgment set, and all the clouds of heaven
Round One who came to judge, to whom was given
Kingdom and state and everlasting power.

That inspiration in thy later hour,
Apostle of the Lamb, uplifted thee
To the same tower of vision, whence to see

A greater revelation; more intense,
As more capacious, grew thy ravished sense,
Apostle of the Lamb; and in its scope
The depth of fear embraced, the height of hope.
Great visions gathered form, and towered, and passed:
Some awful with the earthquake, fire, and blast;
Some with the hope of peace; some manifest
Of calm abiding and eternal rest;
Yet mostly awful: prophet never paled
With terrors like to his whose senses quailed
In telling out the vials of God's wrath:
Sad thought, that even he who chiefly hath
Love's gospel written, saw the utmost woes
Of plague and fire and sword, and dæmon foes!
Sorrow must needs be, then, on earth the law.

Tell out the Vision which this prophet saw,
The Constant and the Changeful: let it be
Divided thus; for like the Thymele

In theatre antique, that awful shrine
From which the passion drew a power divine,
One part through all the vision stood unchanged,
Awful, sublime, although the spirit ranged
From scene to scene, from act to act of dread,
'Mid horror, anguish, doubt, to triumph led.

Take first the Constant Vision; 'tis the Throne
Steadfast in heaven, 'tis He who sits thereon;
Within its midst the Lamb eternally,
Round it the rainbow and the shining sea,
Most nigh to it the six-fold winged Four;
And next, the crown'd Elders who adore,
'Mid tabernacle walls abiding evermore.
There stands the Holiest of all, complete
With Presence-cloud of glory, Mercy-seat,
And cherub: there the Sanctuary dight
With rainbow hues more excellently bright
Than those old curtains purple, scarlet, blue;
Furnished with Incense Altar, as was due,

But not with Sacrificial, where did reign
For evermore the Lamb that had been slain :
There for the Brazen Sea the Sea of Glafs ;
There for the Golden Candlestick there was
That branch of Angel-stars ; for Minifters
Ranged in their courfes served the Prefbyters.
Vaft fymbol of divine ftability,
Of love divine not lefs true imagery !
Great angels on their miffions iffue thence,
As from the covert of Omnipotence ;
Yet thither come, as incenfe to the altar,
The fecret prayers with which the earth doth falter,
The bitter wrongs with which the earth doth groan :
And by the vifion is this precept fhown,
That juftice, mercy, peace, o'er all do reign,
And lovelinefs and fanctity maintain
The throne that rules o'er all ; 'tis God who bears
The fovereignty fupreme ; God who prepares
The final iffues ; God beneficent
Who works in time and change His own intent.

Take then the Changing Vision: 'tis the earth,
Corrupt, untimely, every monstrous birth
Of time still urging through more fearful fall
Unto the end foredoomed, the judgment set for all.
The strife of good and evil sears the ground,
Thickens the air, of earth; in some profound
Of gloom or glory hangs the central scale
That balances creation; Virtue pale,
Wisdom contemned, and Faith despairing, lie
At mercy of earth's ghaftly harlotry;
While Providence is mystery with the seals,
Omnipotence is war with trumpet-peals,
Justice is wrath with vials of the law:
Tell out the Changing Vision which he saw.

He saw the seals unclosed: the horses four
Rose with their riders dread; the Conqueror,
Who bore the bow; and War, who bore the sword;
Famine, who of the balances was lord;

And Death the fourth, pale Death, whose train is hell.
Then cry the souls that 'neath the altar dwell;
The sun grows black, the stars their courses leave;
God's chosen in each tribe the seal receive;
And issue forth, while silence is in heaven,
The sounding Angels with their trumpets seven.

He heard them sound: the earth in plague and blight
Plunged her black form amid the angry light
From baleful meteors cast; impetuous broke
On th' upper air 'mid dim sulphureous smoke
The brood of hell, whose king Abaddon was:
There was the rush of countless steeds that pass
To fields of death; the third of men are slain;
Yet unrepentant they who still remain:
Then in this dreariness of blood and shade
Obscure and monstrous shapes the world invade,
The Dragon, Beast, False Prophet, cursed three,
Earth's torturers, infernal trinity:

So that the end is nigh ; with solemn pace
The vial-bearing Angels take their place,
Like sacrificers clothed in simple white : ^b
Their vials fall upon the world of night.

He saw them fall : as one by one they fell,
Ulcers and blains afflict the brood of hell ;
The sea tormented heaves like clotted blood ;
In blood the rivers pour their latest flood ;
The blazing sun consumes the flesh of men ;
With blasphemies they gnaw their tongues for pain ;
A voice from heaven refounds that all is done,
Bursts forth at once each dread phænomenon,
And nature seems reversed ; the end is come,
The judgment trumpet breaks above the tomb.

^b It is observable that the Angels with the Vials wore the simple robes which used to be worn by the High Priest in offering sacrifice on the Great Day of Atonement : they were " clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles."—*Rev.* xv. 8.

Such was the Changing Vision that he saw,
So fraught with shapes of might, with scenes of awe,
Which, ending time, predicts eternity.
Hard is it in the throng of imagery
With steady sense to mark the deeper thought
Which harmonises all, and how is wrought
A perfect whole from parts as vast and wild
As unhewn blocks by giant builders piled
To form a temple: yet no phantasies
Of fragments flung by chance, be sure, are these:
And he who searches deeply may descry
The central meanings which do underlie
The total vision, and through all compact,
Seals, trumpets, vials, in their seven-fold act.

Two cities and two women John did see,
And then a third, which seemed at once to be
City and woman in one mystery.
Sodom and Babylon, those cities twain,
The den of lust, the seat of rule and gain:

Through that were all those vengeful trumpets blown,
Through this those vials upon earth were thrown :^c

^c The Seven Trumpets are connected with the punishment of the allegorical Sodom (VIII.-XII.), which does not take place until the elect out of every Jewish tribe have received the seal of God. The Seven Vials are connected with the punishment of Babylon, which is resolved upon in chap. XIV. 8. ("And there followed another angel saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen,") immediately before the Vials begin to be poured out; at the end of them it is declared that now Babylon had come in remembrance before God (XV.-XIX.).

The identity of the allegorical Sodom (called also Egypt in chap. XI. 9: *ἦτις καλεῖται πνευματικῶς Σοδομα καὶ Αἴγυπτος*), with which so large a part of the book is concerned, with Jerusalem, is very plain. It was there *ὅπου ὁ Κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρώθη*; it was there that the holy Temple was, which John was commanded to measure (chap. XI.), but the outer court of which was to be left to the Gentiles, in sign that foreign nations took possession of the Holy City; and it was there that the two witnesses prophesied and were slain, who are mentioned (in chap. XI.) in terms of magnificent eulogy. Now S. John himself connects these two witnesses with the typical scenery in *Zech.* IV., which refers to Jerusalem (chap. XI. 4): *Οὐτοὶ σῖσιν οἱ δύο ἐλαίαι, καὶ αἱ δύο λυχναὶ αἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Κυρίου τῆς γῆς ἐστῶτες.*

The identity of the other allegorical city, Babylon, with Rome is generally admitted.

That Sodom was Jerufalem, e'en ſhe
Who killed the prophets, and for blaſphemy
Condemned the Lord of ſpeech; there with his rod
The prophet meaſured out the houſe of God;
There the two martyrs prophesied and died.
That Babylon was Rome, the ſeat of pride,
Raiſed o'er the waters, in whoſe ſtoried heights
Was lodged the eagle of a thouſand flights;
Where ſtill ſupreme the Gentile idols ſtand,
And from the Capitol the world command.

Two women he beheld; the one was fair,
Clothed with the ſun, bedecked with ſtars her hair,
The moon beneath her; travelling in pain
Above the earth ſhe hovered, and was fain
To ſhun the dragon, who in wait did lie
To ſlay her child, and forced her ſtill to fly
To deſerts void in that laborious birth,
While he his monſtrous bulk upon the earth

Deploys, nor ceases from his injury.
Then lo ! another rushes o'er the sea
In aid of him, a wondrous form, whose mien
Hushed e'en the foam ; it was the beast marine,
The seven-headed monster, who became
The dragon's delegate, and in his name
Had worship upon earth, the scarlet beast,
Whom the False Prophet served, a hideous priest.
This monster bore a fair similitude
Of woman, all in Tyrian dye imbued,
A forcerefs, who did with blood entrance
The kings of earth in ghostly dalliance ;
Her crimson hands a charmèd chalice bore,
Of gems a sparkling diadem she wore,
And on her brow was written Mystery :
The second woman of the vision she.

As that first woman was compelled to fly
To deserts void, so Christianity

Of wandering Judaïsm with pain was born,
 The child received to God, the mother left forlorn.
 As on the monster sat the forcerefs,
 So Rome upon the seven hills did prefs
 Her awful domination, ftill fupplied
 From all earth's treafuries, ftill magnified
 By all the kings of earth, whom fhe enchained ;
 Yet doomed to perifh hated and difdained
 E'en by her lovers,^d pitilefsly maimed,
 Her body burnt, ftript naked, made afhamed.

And thus the prophet imaged in his day
 Jerufalem and Rome, the powers that lay
 Againft the truth ; the women represent
 That which the cities in the vifion meant,

^d Chap. XVII. 12 : τὰ δέκα κέρατα δέκα βασιλεῖς εἰσι. Chap.
 V. 16 : καὶ τὰ δέκα κέρατα καὶ τὸ θῆριον, οὗτοι μισήσουσι τὴν
 πόρνην, καὶ ἡρημωμένην ποιήσουσιν αὐτὴν καὶ γυμνὴν, καὶ
 τῆς σάρκος αὐτῆς φάγονται, καὶ αὐτὴν κατακαύσουσιν ἐν πυρὶ.

Jerusalem and Rome: the same great thought
Breathes through the whole; a fight is to be fought,
A triumph won; and in these types he viewed
Far off the triumph, near the fearful feud.
But now, behold, the triumph comes at last,
The strife is over and the woes are past;
The troubled vision ends in glorious rest;
Time by eternity is dispossessed.

Behold the third great sign from heaven glide,
The New Jerusalem, adorned a Bride,
City and woman both: with turrets spread,
As with a royal crown, her shining head;
Twelve gates of gleaming pearl those towers adorn,
As gems upon a diadem are worn;
Descends through all its depth her shining wall
Like royal robes that down the body fall;
Her rich foundations, like phylacteries
On garments worn with names engraven rise.*

* Chap. xxi. 14: τὸ τεῖχος τῆς πόλεως ἔχον θεμελίους δώδεκα, καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα ὀνόματα τῶν δώδεκα Ἀποστόλων τοῦ Ἀγρίου.

This is the Bride of Christ, His Church elect
And precious, unto her espousals decked:
The Bridegroom tarries not, the feast is set;
The heavenly guests for evermore are met.

He saw the joy: the angel bade him stand
Upon a mountain high; the promised land
Of the New Heaven and Earth this Moses saw,
The happiness, the sanctity, the awe,
The adoration: he beheld the waves
Of that red sea of fire and glass that laves
The second Salem of the great I AM:
He heard the song of Moses and the Lamb
Mixed with the Alleluias to the Three
That were, that are, that evermore shall be.

Enis.

